



HOW TO KEEP YOUR SUMMER GAINS (AND LOSSES)

Even people who are mostly sedentary get into the swing of things in summer. The weather is better and the days are longer. We're naturally drawn into doing things outside, and we have more daylight to enjoy doing them. So if you're like most people, your wellbeing got a lift this summer. You took some time to relax and enjoy yourself, and felt better emotionally. You were more active, gaining in fitness and maybe losing a few pounds.

But now it's time to wind down the vacation and prepare to get back to the "daily grind." Does that mean saying goodbye to the wellbeing benefits of summer? Do you give up feeling better physically and emotionally? Do you put back on the pounds you lost?

You can, in fact, keep the summer's health dividends, and you can do it without giving up your job or spending money for a perpetual summer lifestyle. The key is to understand the things that make you feel better during the summer and to make them into habits throughout the year.

SUMMER HEAT NOT NEEDED TO BURN CALORIES

You can keep active when the weather cools and the days shorten. Make 20-30 minutes of exercise part of your daily routine. You don't need a fitness club membership, stylish workout clothes or fancy running shoes. A brisk, half-hour walk in casual clothes and comfortable shoes is good for you. Give it a time slot in your schedule – perhaps as part of your lunch break at work. In addition to a regular exercise routine, don't miss chances to burn extra calories. Just going up a floor or two? Take the stairs instead of the elevator. Got an errand to somewhere within walking distance? Leave the car and walk. Online calculators – such as the one under "Tools & Calculators" on MHN's member website (www.members.mhn.com) – estimate the calories burned by exercises and activities, from aerobics to yoga.

If you're prone to winter weight gain, you're not alone. In addition to being less active, people tend to adopt a less healthy diet and eat more when the weather turns cool. Some theorize that this is a remnant of the evolutionary need to eat as much and as often as possible during the food-scarce winter months. Avoid the trap by watching what you eat more closely. A food journal is a great idea. Again, use your member's login at members.mhn.com and click on "Diet & Nutrition" under the "Wellness" tab to find a combination food journal and nutritional guide.

A HALF-HOUR VACATION?

The more relaxed emotional state you associate with summer is good for you. It eases stress and lessens the health risks that come with it. Retain some of that week-at-the-beach calm by giving yourself micro and mini vacations.

If you can manage to schedule a week or two off each summer, you can give yourself a few minutes off each day. Take breaks during the workday. Give yourself a half-hour of quiet time at home each evening. Plan work-free weekend activities that you or you and your family enjoy. Strive for that balance in which work and daily life compliment each other rather than compete.

You can't live the mythical endless summer. But you can make changes in your life that give you the season's boost in physical and emotional health. Taking care of body and mind is a year-round job.

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